



TOP

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

DECEMBER 13TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 13, 2018 - Remaining in the Vine

John 15:7-17

THURSDAY

13

When Jesus gave the disciples His final instructions before going to the cross, He repeated a particular word. *Abide*—which occurs 10 times in John 15—isn't one we use often, but it accurately conveys the relationship between Christ and His followers.

Abide means “to remain, dwell, continue, endure, or tarry.” Can you hear the call to faithfulness in these words? Our relationship with Jesus isn't a onetime event of salvation but a long and steady walk with Him.

Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches” (John 15:5). This is a fact for everyone who has been born again. But He also tells us to abide in Him (John 15:4), signifying that we have some responsibility as branches in Christ. Therefore, it's essential that we know how to remain in Him.

Jesus says to let His words abide in us (John 15:7). Incorporating God's Word into our minds and hearts is how we dwell with Him and learn to know Him intimately.

Obedience is another essential aspect of abiding (John 15:10). It's like being an employee who obeys his manager's instructions and does not take matters into his own hands. We are to rely on the Spirit's direction instead of strategizing and making plans on our own.

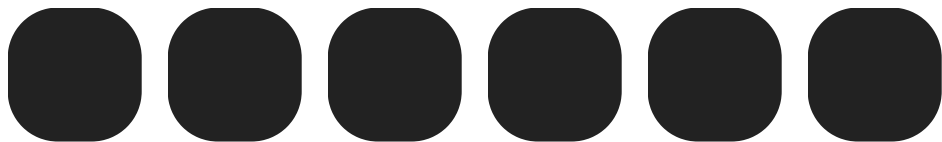
Abiding in Christ also includes our relationships with fellow believers. Jesus commands us to love one another just as He has loved us (John 15:12).

God's desire is that we bear much lasting fruit by abiding in Christ. This isn't a sporadic endeavor done only when convenient; it's an enduring commitment to remain in God's Word and continue in obedience and love.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 12, 2018 - The Abiding Life

Daily Devotional - Wednesday, December 12, 2018 - The Abiding Life

John 15:1-6

WEDNESDAY

12

Who doesn't love a beautiful bouquet of flowers? They are a delight to the eyes and fill the room with fragrance. But truthfully, they're dead because they've been disconnected from the plant. Although they may look alive for a while, in time they wither away.

This was the point Jesus was making when He used a grapevine and its branches as an illustration of a believer's life in Christ. Once we're saved, we become branches of Christ—then fruit is produced as His life flows through us, in fulfillment of what Jesus prayed for us in John 17:21.

This abiding relationship is what the Bible elsewhere describes as the Spirit-filled life (Eph. 5:18). The word “abiding” emphasizes our position as branches remaining in the vine of Christ. And the apostle Paul underscores the Holy Spirit's role and authority in our life: As we live in submission and obedience to God's Spirit, He produces His fruit in us (Gal. 5:22-23).

The problem arises when we try to live apart from the vine and direct our own life. The end result is often frustrating or disappointing since we have relied on human ideas and energy instead of being Spirit-led. There is no way to live a spiritually fruitful life without obedience to the Holy Spirit.

Our heavenly Father has graciously given us this abiding relationship, but sometimes we act as if we're the vine and Christ exists to do our bidding. In which areas of your life are you reluctant to relinquish control? We were designed to be the branches, and the only way we'll be fruitful is by submissively abiding in the source of our life.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 11, 2018 - How to Listen to God's Words

DECEMBER 11TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Tuesday, December 11, 2018 - How to Listen to God's Words

Nehemiah 8:1-9

In our culture, Bibles are so plentiful that we often take them for granted. This was not the case in Ezra's day. After being exiled from Israel for many years, the Jews had finally returned to their land, and today's passage describes their reaction to hearing the Scriptures. We may have easy access to Bibles today, but we'd do well to learn to approach God's Word in the same manner as these Israelites did.

With eager attentiveness. The people listened attentively as Ezra read Scripture "from daybreak till noon" (Neh. 8:3 NIV). How eager are you each day to open God's Word and devote time to reading and study?

With reverence and worship. When Ezra opened the scroll, all the people stood up in reverence and then bowed down to worship the Lord (Neh. 8:5-6). Scripture reveals who God is and increases our awe of Him and respect for His Word.

With understanding. There were people who helped others understand what they heard, similar to the way pastors and teachers do today (Neh. 8:7-8). Do you skim over passages you don't understand, or do you rely on the many sound teaching resources available?

With repentance. After hearing God's Law, they were convicted of sin and repented with mourning and weeping (Neh. 8:9). God's Word is sanctifying, revealing sin and guiding us into righteousness.

It's easy to take for granted what is commonly available, but we should never lose sight of the most valuable possession God has given us—His inspired, inerrant Word.

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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Friday, December 7, 2018 - Good Discipline

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Hebrews 12:4-11

FRIDAY

07

To gain a deeper understanding of the loving nature of God's discipline, try to remember your own childhood. Maybe you heard these familiar words from a parent or guardian: "This hurts me more than it hurts you." Back then, you probably did not appreciate or even believe that sentiment. Nor did you comprehend the true meaning until you became an adult. Discipline is painful for both the recipient and the administrator, but the benefits outweigh the suffering.

Good parents love their children enough to look beyond their immediate comfort and work toward a more beneficial long-term goal—the transformation of foolish, self-centered juveniles into wise, loving adults. The heavenly Father is working in the same way to mature His children. Divine discipline is a necessary part of the process and an expression of His goodness and love.

Although God knows the most effective means of disciplining us, the outcome is influenced by our attitudes and responses. We can choose to submit and be trained by it, or we can rebel and waste the opportunity to grow in Christlikeness. God is always working for our good, but by choosing our own way, we reject His best and grieve His heart.

If you don't align your thinking with the truth of Scripture, the pain and suffering of divine discipline may produce the sour fruit of a bitter attitude, an angry heart, and a distorted view of God. Instead, trust in His perfect will and choose to be teachable. He will produce the fruit of righteousness in your life.

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[Go to post](#)



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[TOP](#)

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 6, 2018 - A Revolutionary Announcement

DECEMBER 06TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

Daily Devotional - Thursday, December 6, 2018 - A Revolutionary Announcement

Acts 2:37-47

THURSDAY

06

Familiarity sometimes robs us of awe and wonder, and this is true of both simple and profound events in life. As Christians, we are familiar with the idea of Jesus' resurrection, but can you imagine the impact it had on those who first heard about it?

When Peter gave his first sermon, he boldly declared, "You ... put Him to death. But God raised Him up again" (Acts 2:23-24). Imagine what a revolutionary statement that was. The assembled crowd knew of Jesus and the miracles He'd performed, and some may even have joined in shouting, "Crucify Him!" (Matt. 27:22). Yet here was one of Jesus' own followers claiming that the Christ couldn't be held by death's power.

Some may have considered the disciples' early accounts of the resurrection to be idle tales, but Pentecost changed all that when God visited mankind in a way He never had before. The crowd witnessed something historic as each person heard the gospel in his or her own language (Acts 2:8-11).

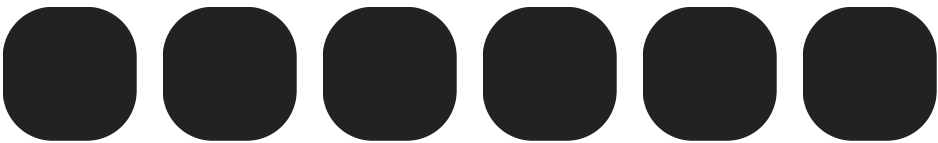
Faith took root in 3,000 repentant hearts when the message of the Lord’s death and resurrection was preached. Those new believers were baptized as a public statement of their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, who died to pay the penalty for their sins.

The revolution sparked by the Holy Spirit that day spread across the world and into the modern era, transforming individuals and the cultures in which they lived. Today the task of proclaiming the death and resurrection of Jesus falls to us. As with the first church, we can trust the Lord to add to our number those who are being saved.

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